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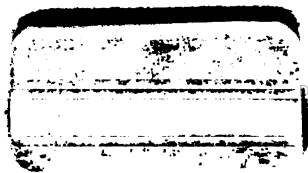
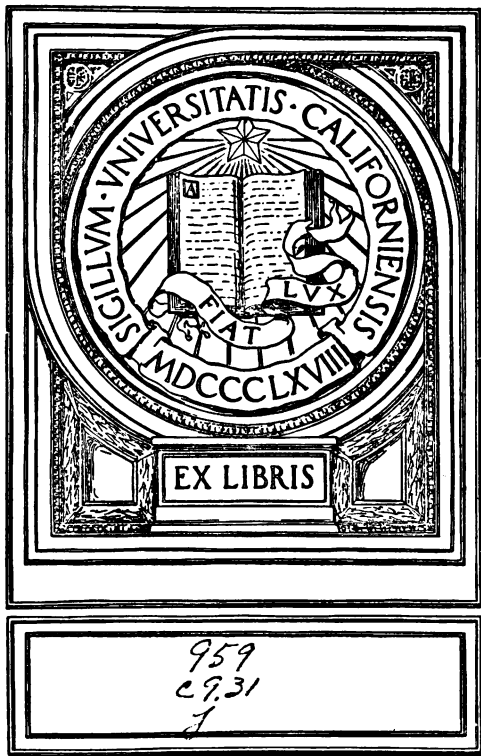
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JONATHAN *le*

(A SONG OF DAVID)

BY

ARTHUR S. CRIPPS *cu*



OXFORD

1902

JONATHAN

(A Song of David)

THE SACRED PRIZE POEM

1902

BY

ARTHUR SHEARLY CRIPPS, M.A.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE
UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

'AMAVIMUS, AMAMUS, AMABIMUS'

Grave in Eversley Churchyard

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TO MY FRIEND
HERBERT MAYNARD SMITH
OF TRINITY COLLEGE
AND SHELSLEY RECTORY, WORCESTER

M49835

'What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-
coffins at last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the deeps of
a meaningless Past ?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's anger
of bees in their hive ?—

* * * *

Peace, let it be ! for I loved him, and love him for ever : the dead
are not dead but alive.'

Tennyson.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

JONATHAN

(A Song of David.)

'The bow of Jonathan turned not back.' II Samuel, i, 22.

'Also he bade them teach the children of Israel the use of
"The Bow."' II Samuel, i, 18.

MOURN, Mizpeh, mourn, thou watch-tow'r of the flocks !
Ramah of Samuel ! Gibeah of Saul !
Ring resonant with mourning, Michmash rocks,
Where he, the fallen, wrought Philistia's fall !
That Bow Jehovah fashion'd in His might
Th' uncircumcised to smite,
Lies broken now by Him whose awful will
Alone could fashion it, or bend, or break.
He sleeps among the slain. He will not wake.
Hopeless of answer, yet invoke him still !

O Jonathan, thou Bow of Israel,
 How wert thou bent thine earliest battle day
 When upon Ammon at the cock-crow fell
 The hosts of God to fend His foes away!
 Relentless Saul! those hawks of rapine fierce
 That Gilead's eyes would pierce,
 To all the fowls of heaven for feast he gave!
 Relentless thou! Thine arrows to the head
 With fury drawn, and to the feathers red,
 For thee unwitting earned thy manhood's grave.

Who but hath heard the psalm our harpers sing
 With kindled eyes and voices scaling high,
 And clutching hands that make the deep chords ring
 Glory to him that grudged his land should die?
 How those sheer dangers of the crags became
 But fuel to thy flame!
 Those glassy cliffs a thousand javelins kept
 Could stay thee not. The Heavenly Archer's Hand
 Slacked not thy Bow-string till from out the land
 His foes in arrow-smitten carnage swept.

Fierce thro' the forest rushed those flying feet ;
 Faint with thine ardours, in the olive's gloom
 As Samson sought'st thou to the bees for meat,—
 Sweet combs that harboured stings of angry doom.
 With eyes enlightened how did'st thou excel
 And tide of ruin swell !
 But lo ! what shadow of the grave is nigh !
 The lot hath claimed thy death !

Rejoice ! Rejoice !

For Israel's armies thunder with one voice,—
 'Touch not an hair of him ; he shall not die !'

O brother's heart, first knit with mine that day
 When to the Lord's Anointed One I came
 Bearing the head which dripped along the way,
 The face still dark in death with wrath and shame.
 Garment and girdle, sword and bow of thine,
 One impulse made them mine !
 Betwixt thy proven bow, my new-girt steel,
 As sure a pact we pledg'd as Patriarchs old.
 Wrought round with divers colours, splash'd with gold,
 The Rainbow of our passion was its Seal !

Strong elder brother in the wars of God,
 Perilous glory in those years we won :
 How proudly in thy strenuous paths I trod,
 Nor cared if evil glooms o'ercast the sun.
 That burthen which in Bethlehem they sing
 About my way would ring,—
 'Intreat me not to turn from thee again,
 Whither thou goest thither will I go :
 Upon mine head abide Jehovah's woe
 If aught save only death shall part us twain !'

Soul of my soul ! Bow, strung with cords of love
 Passing the love of women, bent for me !
 Darting but scorn on his vain watch who strove
 To rid a friend and wrest a throne for thee.
 Exceeding love,—a crown that reckoned not
 But for a friend forgot !
 In whose stern manhood prince and hero spent
 Themselves as nought to fashion but a friend !
 O perfect love, that to th' imperfect end
 Rememberedst David in his banishment !

Canst thou recall that night the fugitive
 Stole to thee under stars to sob his grief
 Too weary longer with his doom to strive,
 Had not the love he leaned on, poured relief?
 'Thou shalt not surely die. The Lord forbid
 For nought from me is hid
 Of all my sire in secret purposeth,
 Nay, all his heart he shall to me declare.'
 So spake thine hope, but answered my despair,—
 'One step alone there is 'twixt me and death !'

Bow, Might of Israel, stretch'd to Heaven above,
 Arrow on arrow thou to God hast sped,
 Prayers sharp with pain and eagle-winged with love;
 Storming the skies that they on David's head
 Show'r peace and length of days and riches spent
 In an unvex'd content.
 How fierce thy wrath, how bitter was thy cry,
 'He hath done no ill, wherefore is death his due?'
 Hard by thy brow th'unnatural javelin flew
 And proved thee faithful for thy friend to die.

Rememberest thou ? Ah, how can'st thou forget ?
 (Can Love forget herself for any grave ?)
 The morn star o'er the Stone of Ezel set,
 The o'erleaping shaft despair's wild news that gave ?
 How dim a watch ere dawn our eyelids kept
 While happier Israel slept !
 What passion, rich as rain-fed rivers roll,
 Bounteous as Hermon's dews, o'erran our speech
 How Israel's Bow was strain'd my griefs to reach,
 My friend that loved me as he loved his soul !

Not unforeseen those after sorrows came,—
 Wide gaped the channel of Hate's fordless flood,
 Dark grew thy vigil o'er a darkening fame,
 Brimmed o'er my pilgrim years with tears and blood.
 Despite mine hunger and my fear and care
 Crouch'd in my fox's lair,
 One dream about me like a sunbeam played
 (Each mote therein a hope that danced for praise),
 God's Angels whisper'd me in all my ways,—
 'He loves thee as his soul, be not afraid !'

But once more might we meet. As hart pursued,
 Scarce by an hand's breadth had I outrun Death :
 In hold of forest outlaws wild and rude,
 Fearless he sought me. Love remembereth
 The last embrace !

How sorrowful that day
 Each went his lonely way !
 Daughters of Israel, they shall sing full well
 How mightily his bow of yore was bent,
 How lion-strong and eagle-swift he went !
 His more-than-woman's love must David tell !

Alas ! I was not near thee when the night
 Approaching shadow'd thee, but could not draw
 Moan of repining, quiv'ring of affright,
 From those calm lips that kept th' Eternal's Law.

With joyless presence of the dead so near
 He knew not how to fear.
 Groaned in his ears the dead Seer's voice of woe,
 Dooming the twain that it had bless'd of old.
 On the king's brow ; the dews of death were cold
 But he rejoicing to that field could go !

O sword of Saul ! O bow of Jonathan !
 No more to be those five fierce cities' dread,
 To cease from Israel having served your span,
 And in the dust be numbered with the dead !
 I know not yet whose lot the Hand Divine
 Leaves darker, yours or mine !
 Blindly I grope and totter to mine end ;
 They are too harsh for me these hands that spill
 Blood o'er my path in moaning torrents still.
 How the king's heart is lonely for a friend !

Ere the Bow snapped and fell unstrung and vain
 Whither was wing'd that arrow of the soul ?
 The void that swallowed it is shut again,
 The clouds it cleft again together roll.
 O but one dint of all that flight to find
 Thro' darkness dumb and blind !
 O for some tidings how my brethren dwell
 In those insatiate caverns of the dead !
 Know Sheol's watches aught of orient red ?
 Yearn her lost saviours yet for Israel ?

Hark ! ravening Benjamin desires his prey,
 Mourning the Bow—that sought his meat so long !
 Lo ! Gilead's hurts no balm may salve away,
 Lacking his arrows of deliv'rance strong !

But list ! more populous the tribes rejoice
 In Sheol with one voice !
 How to his welcome press those Benjamites
 That in their deaths all Israel's ire defied !
 Him Ehud meets in kingly crimson dyed,
 Acclaim him Jephthah's war-worn Gileadites !

Hark ! how with peal of psalm and timbrel-sound
 Daughters of Israel meet him on his road ;
 Thousands in jubilant dances surge around
 The path with flow'rs and shredded scarlet strowed.
 Miriam ! Deborah ! The Victim Maid
 That unto death obeyed !
 What tumult and what joy !

Ah ! vain appears

My rumour of a mirth we may not know.
 Sped is the soul-shaft whither such must go,
 The broken Bow is left us, and our tears !

Resound ye, stone to stone, and hill to hill,
 Clefts of Engedi roar the message by !
 The crags of Benjamin with echoes fill !
 Sad Ezel's trysting-rock take up the cry !
 Gilboa, shriek thy shame and sorrow clear
 Till snows of Hermon hear !
 Be all great Lebanon one moan of pain !
 Hail-surge of fury, wind of wrath, awake !
 As bows o'er bent, th' o'ertopping cedars break !
 And yet 'tis all in vain, 'tis all in vain.

I go to him, he shall not turn to me,
 Then wherefore weep or fast or sack-cloth wear ?
 Nay rather, jeoparding my life as he,
 One hope be mine at last his death to share !
 To find him in the hidden ways of God,—
 Haste we the way he trod.
 Bow, that from fight or friendship turn'st not back,
 God set thee o'er my night a constant star !
 The light of thee leap forth to me afar
 Nor let me wander from thy blood-stain'd track !

Jehovah of our fathers, all is well !
 Thy sun beholding, who can doubt Thee Light ?
 In Thy Light shall we see light. None dare tell
 That all our purpose ends in endless night.
 O Thou, despising none that Thou hast plann'd,
 The works of Thine own Hand !
 Haply each chosen Bow, or Spear, or Sword
 That Hand shall purge from Time's base canker clear !
 Haply new hosts of wrath our Bow shall fear,
 Waging th' eternal warfare of his Lord !

This much I know, what lot so e'er betides
 The souls by Thee beloved, or sleep alone
 Or after-waking, Thine the Hand that guides,
 In perfectness providing for Thine own.
 The man I mourn I know beloved by me,
 Yet how much more by Thee !
 All, all is well. In honour is his end,
 For me the skies in Tyrian splendour smile,
 Count me not thankless when I sob awhile
 'Would God that I had died for thee, my friend !'

NOTES.

PAGE 6, line 10. I Samuel xxxi, 11-13: The men of Jabesh-Gilead rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines in gratitude for the deliverance of their city. It is assumed that Jonathan was present at that deliverance. (I Samuel xi).

PAGE 8, lines 7-10. The protestation of Ruth, David's ancestress.

PAGE 8, lines 15, 16. See Saul's disregarded warning in I Samuel xx, 30, 31.

PAGE 11, lines 16-21. It is assumed that Jonathan was present at the scene in the cave of Endor.

PAGE 13, lines 5, 6. Cf. Judges xx.

PAGE 13, lines 13, 14. Cf. Judges xi, 34 to end.

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